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772 The plateau tribes have legends of human women being carried off to the under world. If they steadfastly refused to eat, the people there would take pity on them and send them back, but if they ate they could not return.

775 It is interesting to conjecture whether the under world was ever considered the abode of the dead. No such belief is held by any of the groups with whom I worked, but certain practices seem to suggest it. There is an ancient Tanala belief that the soul is drawn back after death to the place where its afterbirth was buried. On the southeast coast each tribe has a sacred river. Unless the umbilical cord of an individual has been thrown into this river, he is not considered a member of the gens, no matter what his descent, and he is debarred from burial in the common tomb. This, in turn, debars his soul from joining those of the ancestors. The tomb is built beside the sacred river when possible and all important ancestral sacrifices are performed on its banks. In some cases part of the blood of the sacrifice must be thrown into the water. There is also a belief in malevolent human spirits who live in the water and are responsible for sudden drownings. Although there is no proof, it seems highly probable that it was once believed that the dead went to the under world through the rivers, returning by the same route to receive the sacrifices.

821 Tanala ideas in regard to the heavenly bodies are vague. The sun *masoandro* ("day's eye") is said to be a ball of fire, but there is no explanation of its motion. At sunset it descends through a hole in the western end of our world and traverses the sky of the under world during our night, rising again through a hole in the east. One account of the Tanala says that they believe that the sun travels back over our sky during the night, but all informants whom I asked considered this ridiculous and it certainly is not the present belief.

The moon, *ombolona*, is a ball of some shining substance, which moves across the heavens of the middle and under worlds on the same track as the sun. None of my informants had ever heard a myth explaining its changes, although its phases were named. The new moon is *volombolona*, first quarter *rimbomboroma*, full moon *varifotsy*, and dark of the moon *maimbolona*. There seems to be no name for the last quarter.

The stars are said to be "things fastened to the sky." Apparently only three groupings of stars are recognized: *Efidrano*, the Milky Way, *Kiotokely mididongo* (lit. "children who fight for a rice mortar"),

sufferer squats on the floor with the pot of steaming mush between his feet and covers himself completely with a lavabo, inhaling as much of the steam as possible and taking a small sweet bath. When the mush has cooled he eats it. After this, his ombiasa will return. Maladies due to this seem to be fairly common and are often diagnosed and treated without calling in an ombiasy. If the sickness recurs frequently a charm against it may be worn. 774 155

The ombiasa leaves the body once for all in incurable insanity and at death. Apparently there is no idea that the insane are possessed. Their actions are due to the aina, which continues to function in the absence of the ombiasa. If they are quiet and peaceful, their needs are provided for, but if they are troublesome, violent, or appear to be in pain, they are killed as quickly and painlessly as possible. If a corpse revives after the funeral ceremonies are well under way, its movements are also thought to be due to the aina, and it is quietly strangled. 775

With a few exceptions, to be noted later, all ombiasa have the same fate after death. Ethical conduct while alive does not affect this, except that a person who has been formally disowned, a notorious sorcerer, or a man of extremely evil life, may be rejected by the spirits of his ancestors and refused a place in their village. Such souls become vagabonds, working evil upon the living and hanging about at sacrifices to intercept the good souls and seduce them into injuring their descendants. In some sacrificial rituals the ancestral spirits are asked to return to their village as soon as they have eaten and to be careful not to talk to any of these vagabonds whom they may meet on the way.

Souls who have been accepted by the ancestors live in villages and carry on an existence exactly like that while alive. They have their chiefs, marry, have children, build houses, plant rice and raise cattle, go on journeys, etc. When bodies are to be moved to a new tomb, the dead are given several days' notice with an admonition to pack their baggage and recall any of their number who are away. Their state is thought to be somewhat more felicitous than that of the living, but they are not exempt from troubles and even sickness. In one ritual the souls are requested to take a share of the offering to any of their number who may be absent through illness. Each soul has exactly the same form as its body at the time of death, even to mutilations and deformities.

The location of the spirit villages is not clear in the native mind. Several informants said that the ombiasa lived on Mount Ambo-

175 Ibrandin, a real mountain in the Ankaratra range. The Imerina and Betsileo believe that the souls of their dead live there, and the Tanala have probably borrowed the idea from them. A very few said that, as the ombiasy were close to the *Zanahary*, their villages must be in the sky, where the *Zanahary* live. One ombiasy, who was unusually well versed in the old tribal lore, said that the spirit villages were actually in the villages of the living, the ombiasy being driven back or held there by their afterbirths, which had been interred before the doors of the houses where they were born. All agreed that the ombiasy often took up their residence in abandoned villages. The commonest belief seems to be that the spirit villages are located near the village tomb or sacred place or in certain localities called ravaka. The ravaka may be the sites of ancient tombs which have been abandoned, old village sites, hilltops, places where one suddenly feels the air to be cold and clammy, or patches of forest in which the [124] growth shows abnormalities. If the vines are twisted and knotted upon themselves and the trees turn in loops, or have stems that divide and unite again above, the place is certainly a ravaka.

[70] Before such places can be cultivated an ox must be sacrificed, but after they have been brought under cultivation an annual sacrifice of rum at planting time seems to be enough. If this is not made, there will be no harvest and the persons who have planted the ravaka will die. Sometimes a special part of the ravaka is set aside for the sacrifices and left untouched.

Although the fate of practically all ombiasy is that already described, there are two exceptions. The Mananbriana gens of the Menabe believe that the ombiasy of persons killed with spears, and of those not buried in the village tombs, change into beings called *ring*. The latter group would include lost bodies, lepers, smallpox victims, and the more flagrant thieves and sorcerers. The *ring* are substantial and have the form of birds about the size of turkeys. They have fire under their wings which shows when they raise them. They are most frequently seen just before the rice is ripe, when people have begun to parch and eat it. They come into the villages at night and eat the chaff where the parched rice has been pounded. It is not dangerous to see them, but they sometimes attack people and that is fatal. The east coast tribes and the Betsileo also believe in the existence of these beings, but do not consider them of human origin. They appear to be derived from the Arab *djinns* and it seems probable that the Tanala, who think very little of non-human spirits, have added the idea of their human origin.

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At the present time the Menabe believe that the souls of their kings pass into *fanoma*, large snakes apparently of the boa family, but the belief has arisen in the last hundred years, in imitation of the Betsileo. The story told of its origin, if true, affords an interesting example of how such ideas may spread. Shortly after the death of King Ramitrovola a *fanoma* came into the royal house at Ambohimanga and although it was put out several times it always returned. It was plainly a portent of some sort and the family called an *ombiasy* ("medicine-man") to see what it meant. He could get no answer from the *sikidy* ("divination") but said he thought the snake must want to tell them something. They called a second *ombiasy* with the same result. Then a man of the Betsileo tribe who was living at Ambohimanga said: "If that happened in our country we should know that it was the soul of a king returning. Perhaps it is so here, since you now have kings." At that time kingship was newly established among the Menabe under the overlordship of the Imerina. The people went through the Betsileo ritual, under his direction, and at the name of Ramitrovola the animal crawled upon the *lamba* spread out for it. After that the Tanala accepted the *fanoma* belief and ceremony. Another visit of the same sort occurred just before the idols were burned at the order of the Imerina queen.

In ordinary practice the term *andriana* is applied only to the souls or doubles of the living. The *andriana* of the dead are called *angatra*, the difference between the two terms being very nearly the same as our own distinction between "soul" and "ghost." *Angatra* is also used as a general term for spirits, including minor Beings not of human origin as well as ghosts.

Angatra of human origin are divided into two classes, the *fahaniry* and the *nisa*. The *fahaniry* are the *andriana* of deceased members of the gens. The term means literally "ninth," in reference to the ninth place in the arrangement of the *sikidy*, which is the place which represents the ancestors. The *fahaniry* supposedly are ever present and take an active interest in the affairs of their descendants, helping and punishing them. They are constantly invoked and sacrificed to and their worship is the core of the native religion. They may be invoked anywhere, but are thought to hear best and be most accessible at the village sacred place, where the memorial stones are erected. They appear to the living as ghosts, or in dreams.

The *nisa* are the *andriana* of remote ancestors whose names and personalities have been forgotten, or of people who occupied a territory before the ancestors of the present inhabitants arrived. They